

Using Quotations in an Essay

Inserting quotations in an essay is a simple process. Anytime a quotation is used, always include the following three items: a signal phrase that introduces the quotation, the quotation itself that is set off with quotation marks, and a citation after the quotation that says where the information came from. The highlighted text in the following excerpt will be the sample quotation for the examples that follow. The excerpt is from an essay titled “Sundays With My Folks” by Harry Shimp and published in the journal *Eclectica* in 2000. The excerpt is found on page 34 of the journal.

To a small boy, church was a time to sit painfully quiet deep down in the pew, drawing silently with a pencil on a small piece of paper, or leafing through the church bulletin, wishing there were pictures. **The pew in front of me seemed to be an impenetrable wall of wood**, so usually I sat there, kicking my feet back and forth, somewhat bored, but suitably awed enough by my mother's presence that I never was truly unruly. After seemingly interminable periods of sitting quietly, the organ would begin to play and we would all stand up and sing a hymn. Well, maybe the adults sang a hymn, but I looked at the pages of the hymnal which my mom held low enough for me to see, and sang with a small boy's voice whatever came to mind. I suppose I thought I was a great help in the general joyous noise. My mom just kept singing.

(Shimp, Harry. “Sundays With My Folks.” *Eclectica*. (2000): 34. Print)

Example one:

The article states that, “The pew in front of me seemed an impenetrable wall of wood” (Shimp 34).

1. The phrase The articles states that is the signal phrase and gives a general idea where the material came from and tells the reader why the quoted material is important.
2. The phrase “The pew in front of me seemed to be an impenetrable wall of wood” is the actual quotation.
3. The citation (Shimp 34) gives the name of the author and the page number where the quotation was found.

Example two:

In his essay, Harry Shimp remembers that, “The pew in front of me seemed an impenetrable wall of wood” (34).

1. The phrase In his essay, Harry Shimp remembers that is the signal phrase, and it says specifically who the author is.
2. The phrase “The pew in front of me seemed to be an impenetrable wall of wood” is the actual quotation.
3. The citation (34) only gives the page number because the author’s name was given in the signal phrase.

Exception: if the source material does not have a page number, give only the author’s last name in the citation